

Canada Post workers: Vote YES to strike! Prepare a political struggle against the corporatist alliance between Canada Post management, CUPW, and the Liberal government!

Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (Canada)
10 September 2024

The following statement was drafted and approved by the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which was established earlier this year to organize postal workers independently of and in opposition to the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) bureaucracy. To get involved with the PWRFC, fill out the form at the end of this article.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) strongly urges the 55,000 postal workers in the Urban Postal Operations (UPO) and Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers (RSMC) groups within the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) to vote YES in the strike vote that began Monday, September 9 and concludes October 20. A resounding vote in favour of job action will send a clear message to all workers that we are ready to wage an all-out fight against the destruction of public services and our working conditions.

However, we declare no confidence in the CUPW leadership, which called the strike vote as nothing more than a negotiating tactic and as a means to quell what it knows is seething opposition among rank-and-file postal workers to management's sweeping concessions demands. We openly declare that our fight is above all political and must be directed against the Liberal government, which is a close political ally of CUPW and backs Canada Post management's attacks on us.

If the CUPW bureaucracy has its way, we will never go on strike, even if we deliver a unanimous strike vote. The bureaucracy has delayed a strike vote for almost nine months, while it has engaged in more than 100 meetings with Canada Post management that have resolved none of our demands. CUPW is now invoking the pro-employer "collective bargaining" framework to drag us through a bogus government-sponsored "negotiation" process that prevents us from striking until November at the earliest.

On December 31, 2021 and January 31, 2022, the RSMC and UPO Collective Agreements, respectively, were set to expire. Instead of preparing for an all-out strike against the employer-state push for increased capitalist exploitation, while the Trudeau Liberal government's "profits before lives" pandemic policy was on full display, CUPW unilaterally acceded to contract extensions of two years.

We were outraged with the official response to the pandemic, as were workers more generally across Canada and globally. This would have been an ideal time to demand better pay and working conditions, as our struggle was naturally and obviously linked up with the working class more broadly. CUPW—and all unions—abdicated their most elementary

responsibilities, giving the government and corporations the green light to maintain a hard line against workers, and continue exposing us to infection and possible death in dangerous workplaces. What we are experiencing right now, with the contract negotiations more than two years on, is theatre, not action.

Postal workers were prepared to fight for better working conditions then, and that has not changed! The two arbitrarily extended collective agreements expired over seven months ago, at the end of December 2023 and January 2024. And now that we finally have a strike vote, we're still lacking a clear plan for a genuine struggle to overturn decades of concessions and secure improvements to our miserable conditions! Instead of a plan, we get bare-bones updates, chronicling all the concessions demanded by the corporation with no discussion of a coherent strategy to confront Canada Post management, the government, and corporate Canada.

Collective agreement extensions and the employer-friendly "collective bargaining" framework have replaced a struggle for better working conditions. Now that the union can't kick the can any further down the road, we're told a strike will not happen until at least November 3. This date, almost a year after our agreements expired, was arrived at after the union filed a "notice of dispute" at the end of July. The anti-democratic provisions of the Canada Labour Code then gave the government, which has backed every attack on us by Canada Post management with strike bans and intimidation, two weeks to appoint a conciliator. This is followed by 60 days of "conciliation," which we are now in, and finally a 21-day "cooling-off" period. This exposes how the system is rigged: There are so many hurdles to pass, taking months before we are even in a legal strike position.

All the while, we toil away under increasingly overwhelming working conditions. Like our brothers and sisters at the United States Postal Service, inflation and annual route evaluations eat away at our pay cheques, while Canada Post management plots their attacks on us behind the scenes, full in the knowledge that the government will back them up with strikebreaking legislation or some other underhanded maneuver when the time comes.

Expand the struggle to oppose government strikebreaking!

We have closely watched the fate of the rail workers over the past three weeks, and it shows that when the chips are down, the capitalist state unfurls its true colours. Never mind that there was a massive strike vote by the rail workers and that their demands for safe workplaces and a decent work-life balance are shared by broad sections of workers, including ourselves. The Liberal government intervened, mobilizing the unelected Canadian Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) to rob the Canadian National (CN) and Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) railway workers of their rights to strike and bargain collectively, instead imposing state-dictated contracts that uphold the corporate dictatorship on North America's railways that are so critical for Washington and Ottawa's imperialist interests.

The same prospect awaits us if we don't organize a political fight against all those forces, including the CUPW bureaucracy, which present the Liberal government as a neutral player, even a "progressive" force susceptible to left-wing pressure, and our struggle as a mere collective bargaining dispute. It is not. We're in a political battle against all of corporate Canada and need the support of the entire working class to win. The upsurge of militant struggles in Canada and the US by auto, rail, delivery, longshore and healthcare and education sector workers demonstrates how favourable conditions are for us to rally support, provided we make our fight the spearhead of a working-class counteroffensive to defend public services and all jobs.

The CUPW leadership fears this prospect like the plague. Negotiations have stalled, with the union admitting publicly that the more than 100 bargaining sessions it has held with management since last year have produced no progress on an agreement acceptable to us. The crown corporation is demanding brutal concessions from workers, and still, no working-class counteroffensive is even being considered by the cowardly union bureaucrats.

CUPW's objective class role is to politically disarm and isolate workers. The union apparatus is in a tripartite alliance with the government and the Canada Post. While they are making noises about a strike, the CUPW leadership is in fact conspiring with Canada Post to determine how best to ram through a rotten contract. That is why they are saying nothing about how workers should prepare to counter the threat of a strikebreaking law or a CIRB-issued back-to-work order, although everyone knows that the threat of state intervention is the linchpin of Canada Post's "bargaining strategy," just as it was that of the railways and the BC shipping companies in 2023.

Public services must not be subordinated to capitalist profit!

Instead of actually negotiating decent wages and working conditions, CUPW National President Jan Simpson would rather focus on imposing even more burdens on postal workers who are already overwhelmed with sorting and delivering mail. Simpson says in a union update, "CUPW has proposed many ideas to help the Corporation grow and recover from the financial situation it finds itself in the last few years including new revenue-generating services like postal banking."

The idea of postal banking floated by top union leadership accepts the premise that Canada Post should be run as a profit-making concern. We don't. Postal workers don't want to be retrained as glorified ATMs and loan sharks! Service fees from postal banking wouldn't end up in workers' pockets, but would go towards bonuses for the bosses and upper management. What kind of financial kickbacks to top union brass and conflicts of interest might be involved in such an arrangement?

Australia has had postal banking for over a century, and they are still facing the same problems postal workers in Canada are facing. From the

PWRFC (Australia):

Amid a precipitous decline in letter mail, virtually all national postal services are engaged in ruthless cost-cutting operations as they increasingly compete with global distribution companies such as Amazon, FedEx and UPS for control of the lucrative parcel delivery business. Postal and other logistics workers, along with gig-economy delivery workers, are being pitched against each other in a race to the bottom as jobs, wages and conditions are slashed.

The same thing could be said about Canada Post. Linking the struggle with workers internationally is one of the many things that separates the PWRFC from the nationalist bureaucrats in CUPW who fight for the profitability of the postal service, knowing full well the burden of profitability will lead to back-breaking, low-paid jobs for postal workers.

The PWRFC (Canada) stated in its Founding Statement:

We face powerful enemies in our struggle, but our potential allies are even stronger. By building the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee, we are appealing to the working class in logistics and other economic sectors across Canada, as well as postal workers and the working class as a whole internationally, to join our fight. We say that there is no way forward within the suffocating, state-sponsored "collective bargaining" system. Rather, we can only counter the looming threat of strikebreaking legislation by making our struggle the starting point for a worker-led counteroffensive against capitalist austerity and war.

While the PWRFC rejects the rotten negotiating framework, we urge postal workers to vote YES and make this vote the starting point of a fight for the mass political mobilization of the working class across Canada in defence of public services and worker rights and against the Trudeau government and its allies in the union bureaucracy.

The PWRFC (Canada) will soon announce the hosting of a public meeting to discuss taking the initiative out of the hands of the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy and the next steps to take in a political rebellion of workers against the corporatist government/CUPW/Canada Post management alliance and its agenda of austerity and slave-like working conditions. Fill out the form below to get involved in our struggle!



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